



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

The Queen

-v-

Kemo Porter, Tristan Richards, Nathaniel Mullings, Cairo Parker, Shaun Carter, Jackson Powell, Aaron Webb & Akeem Jeffers

Sentencing remarks of Mr Justice Griffith Williams

25 June 2014

Within minutes of the fatal attack on Antoin Akpom, Nathaniel Mullings told Shaun Carter of it, Tristan Richards contacted his partner, Shavez Jeffers to tell her to contact Antoin Akpom's partner Amber Riley and Shaun Carter drove to the gym on Sussex Street. All three were to play pivotal roles in the increasing activity which followed as those who were in due course to carry out a revenge attack were gathered together.

It was known at that early stage that Abdul Hakim was one of those responsible for the attack because he was known to some who had witnessed it.

Shaun Carter drove in the Yaris to collect Aaron Webb, and Nathaniel Mullings - in the Golf - met up with them at Shaun Carter's flat. Nathaniel Mullings then drove the not inconsiderable distance to Gleneagles Avenue to collect Jackson Powell from football training and to drive him to his home where he changed. In due course, they went with Shaun Carter, Aaron Webb and Akeem Jeffers in the Yaris and two others in another car to Joe French's house where Shaun Carter left them and drove off in the Yaris. By then it was known that Antoin Akpom had died.

While these events were taking place, Tristan Richards and Kemo Porter were in Tristan Richard's home at 58, Sparkenhoe Street not far from the address in Staughton Street South of the grandmother of Amber Riley where a large number of people had congregated. During the course of the evening, Tristan Richards left the house a number of times and Shaun Carter drove the Yaris to Staughton Street South 3 times. By the last of those 3 occasions, he had met up with Cairo Parker and with Kemo Porter who were the passengers in the car when he met Courtney Challenger and Oliver Allen by arrangement. It was following that meeting that Shaun Carter drove the Yaris with Kemo Porter and Cairo Parker to Wood Hill. I am satisfied that Tristan Richards used Kemo Porter as a messenger and arranged for him to make his separate way to Wood Hill in the Yaris so that he (Tristan Richards) could set up his own alibi, in part by arranging for his mother to drive him there.

At about the same time, and after leaving Joe French's house, Nathaniel Mullings drove the Golf with Jackson Powell, Aaron Webb and Akeem Jeffers, his passengers, to Wood Hill and Tristan Richards was driven there by his mother, and so it was that all 8 were collected together for the first time.

I am sure that the purpose of that meeting was to finalise arrangements for the premeditated and planned attack on Abdul Hakim's house on Wood Hill. Whether the type of attack had been considered earlier that evening it is impossible to know but I am satisfied the plan was finalised in the 20 minutes or so the defendants were at the top of Wood Hill and on Prospect Road. If there had been any talk of bricking the house – which I doubt – it would have been quickly dismissed as an option because the defendants were out for really significant revenge.

That this was their intention is proved by the mobile phone silence which I am satisfied Tristan Richards enforced, by the decision to drive the cars with their lights off and to park a

short distance away for a speedy escape and by the steps taken after the fire by many of the defendants to get rid of mobile phone data and clothing.

And so all eight defendants set out from Wood Hill to attack the house of Abdul Hakim by fire. The journey to Noel Street may have been to collect cannabis but I have concluded its real purpose was to get petrol without drawing attention by visiting a garage. That petrol was carried in the Yaris.

Once back on Wood Hill, they split into two groups only because the Golf had to be parked on the other side of the junction to the Yaris. Tristan Richards and Kemo Porter led the way to the house, Tristan Richards with the petrol and Kemo Porter with the lighter. Close behind were Shaun Carter and Aaron Webb. On the other side of the street were Nathaniel Mullings, Jackson Powell, Cairo Parker and Akeem Jeffers.

Cairo Parker was recruited because he, as a resident of Wood Hill knew or thought he knew where Abdul Hakim lived and so it was that he was called forward by Tristan Richards to point out the house.

The horror of what then happened is all too apparent. The quantity of petrol and the pouring of petrol through the letter box provide the evidence the plan was that the house was to be consumed by fire, a fire which took hold instantly and spread upstairs. The terrified Shehnila Taufiq, her daughter Zainab and her sons Mohammed Bilal and Mohammed Jamal tried to escape but there was and could not have been any escape from that ferocious fire. A small, but moving detail in the evidence was the account of the next door neighbour who heard over a period of 10/15 seconds what she described as “panicky noises” crying and words such as ‘help’ from the children’s bedroom.

If the house had been Abdul Hakim’s house and he with members of his family had been there, these would have been atrocious crimes and the belief he was responsible for the

murder of Antoin Akpom would in no way have mitigated the offending. Indeed the taking by the defendants of the law into their own hands should properly be regarded, and will be regarded, as an aggravating factor in each case. Other aggravating factors are that there was significant degree of premeditation and planning, there was the use of petrol as an accelerant and this was group offending.

That the victims were the wholly innocent and worthy Mrs Taufiq and her three children, who on any view were forces for good in the community, makes the offending even more heinous.

Doctor Taufiq, whose dignified presence throughout the trial has been remarkable, said:

“I am sure any husband and parent thinks and speaks fondly of their spouse and offspring but I say this with complete conviction, these four people were extra-ordinary people. They had a strong concern for the welfare of others even before their own comfort. They had devoted their lives to a dream to give to others. To serve others – the needy, the less privileged, the misguided. It hurts me from the core of my soul that these four amazing human beings whom I had the honour of being directly related to have been cheated of their natural life. This fire has stolen everything from me”

He told in the most moving of terms of his loss, its effect upon him and of his dedication to complete, in their memory, the family goal of setting up a community centre in Dublin. He too is a victim of what he described as “a heartless, malicious act”.

While Tristan Richards has no convictions which aggravate his offending, he was clearly a Class A drug dealer but there is no evidence that these events were linked to the drug trade or to a Post Code gang dispute. Even so, on the evidence I am satisfied that Tristan Richards had a reputation as someone who was not to be crossed. In reaching that conclusion, I have not been influenced by the evidence of some of the defendants to the effect that he has a

reputation as one who stabs and shoots people and burns houses down. There is no evidence whatsoever to support those allegations but I am sure he is someone who is feared for other reasons. The credible evidence of Aaron Webb was that he was not the sort of person you can talk to. I observe that Tristan Richards yet again made his partner give perjured evidence in support of his defence case.

I have no doubt that it was his decision to use petrol to attack the house and that his target throughout was Abdul Hakim.

A feature of this case is that the defendants, with the exception of Tristan Richards, acted out of character.

Kemo Porter, now aged 19 years was described by a character witness as “polite, quiet and very unselfish”. He had learnt how to mentor young people, to help them make something of their lives. I accept that assessment of him and the assessment of a member of his church that he was reserved, well-mannered and very helpful when in church. I consider the reprimand in 2010 can be ignored and he can be treated as a person of previous good character.

Nathaniel Mullings is 19 years old; I consider his conviction in 2009, when he was 14 years old can also be ignored and he too can be treated as a person of previous good character.

Cairo Parker is now 17 years old but was only 16 years old in September 2103. Like Jackson Powell, Aaron Webb and Akeem Jeffers he has no convictions, cautions or reprimands. All will be treated as persons of previous good character. In the cases of Jackson Powell and Aaron Webb, both 20 years old and Akeem Jeffers who is 21 years old there is the evidence considered by the jury of their positive good character and in the case of Aaron Webb, four further references which confirm the assessment that he acted out of character.

In Cairo Parker’s case, I have read and considered four statements from witnesses whose opinions are that his offending was also out of character.

In each of their cases, I shall treat their previous good character as a mitigating factor.

While Shaun Carter was convicted in May 2013 of possession of cannabis with intent to supply, in my judgment, it has no relevance to issues of his culpability and his reprimand in 2002 for theft of a bicycle can be ignored.

I accept that each defendant was very upset at the death of Antoin Akpom whom they individually regarded as a friend. Their participation, and that of Kemo Porter is explained, in my judgment, not only by their upset but also by the reactions of the many who met together in the hours following his death to share their grief. He was undoubtedly a very popular man. But while this may explain the behaviour of the defendants, it cannot excuse it.

While Tristan Richards is a calculating man, I have no doubt the other defendants were carried away by their own grief and by the reactions of others and that this explains why they were influenced to act out of character. In that regard, their ages are a relevant consideration.

TRISTAN RICHARDS & KEMO PORTER

You were parties to the plan to set the house of Abdul Hakim on fire in the belief that he was there and with the intention of killing him. You, Tristan Richard, were the ring leader. I have no doubt that yours was the dominant role. You acquired the petrol and you led the other defendants to the house.

Kemo Porter, although you acted under the influence of Tristan Richards, you knew full well what the consequences of your actions would be. You had opportunities to dissociate yourself from the plan but you did not.

The sentence in both your cases must reflect both the number of deaths and also that the setting of fire to a person's home with the intention of causing death is peculiarly horrifying, because the victims will inevitably suffer real agony.

The sentences in your cases, having regard to the facts of the offending and the aggravating and mitigating factors I have identified are as follows:

The sentences in your case Tristan Richards are concurrent sentences of Life Imprisonment.

The minimum term you will serve before the Parole Board will consider your release is 35 years.

The sentences in your case Kemo Porter, having regard to your age, to the evidence of your good character and the fact that you acted under the influence of Tristan Richards are concurrent sentences of Custody for Life. The minimum term you will serve before the Parole Board will consider your release is 25 years.

In the cases of each of the remaining defendants, I have considered whether there is evidence that any presents a danger to the public. I have concluded there is none and so there will be determinate custodial sentences in each case.

Each of you was party to a premeditated plan to set fire to the house, an unlawful act which any sensible person would inevitably realise must subject someone to at least the risk of some physical harm. Each of you - and this observation applies with equal force to Cairo Parker, the youngest of all of you - must have realised that. While you may not have believed Abdul Hakim or his family were there, you were not to know whether others may be there. The attack was carried out at night when the house would be expected to be in darkness and no steps were taken to ensure the house was empty.

As a consequence of your unlawful act, four innocent people met a terrible end. The sentences in each of your cases must reflect not only the number who died but also the terrifying manner of their deaths.

SHAUN CARTER & NATHANIEL MULLINGS

You were both very active in collecting defendants together with the expressed intention of avenging the death of Antoin Akpom. Without your active assistance as the drivers of the two cars, these offences would not have been committed. You played leading roles. Having regard to the aggravating and mitigating factors which I have identified, I sentence you as follows:

SHAUN CARTER – to concurrent sentences of 15 years imprisonment

NATHANIEL MULLINGS – to concurrent sentences of 15 years Detention in a Young Offenders Institution

JACKSON POWELL, AARON WEBB & AKEEM JEFFERS

Each of you is intelligent and each of you knew full well the seriousness of the planned attack using petrol. I am satisfied not one of you spoke out against it or did or said anything to stop it; I am satisfied you all provided willing support for what happened. Having regard to the aggravating and mitigating factors I have identified, I sentence you as follows:

JACKSON POWELL to concurrent sentences of 12 years Detention in a Young Offenders Institution

AARON WEBB to concurrent sentences of 12 years Detention in a Young Offenders Institution

AKEEM JEFFERS to concurrent sentences of 12 years imprisonment

CAIRO PARKER

In your case Cairo Parker it is unclear how you came to be a part of this group but I am satisfied you were recruited because the others thought you knew where Abdul Hakim lived and that once recruited you played a more than willing role. Save that I accept it was you who crossed Wood Hill, I reject as frankly incredible the evidence of Aaron Webb that you told Tristan Richards you did not know which house it was.

As you answered no questions and did not give evidence, I look to other evidence for an assessment of your maturity, observing that one of your character references describes you as 'young for your age' and another – albeit in a footballing context - as 'a very mature young person who knew when to draw the line'. After considering the detailed chronology of the events and your part in them, I am satisfied not only that you knew full well what the plan was but also of your importance to its implementation by reason of the fact that you claimed to know where the house was.

Because of your age, the Overarching Principles: Sentencing Youths apply and your sentence will be adjusted accordingly.

I sentence you to concurrent terms of 8 years Detention in accordance with the provisions of section 91 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) act 2000